Newspapers by ancestry
https://www.newspapers.com/image/710534237

Downloaded on Mar 26, 2024

Obituaries

Ezra Vogel, a Harvard scholar of Japan, China

By Bryan Marquard
GLOBE STAFF

With the intriguing title "Japan as Number One: Lessons for America," Ezra Vogel's best-known book was a best seller in Japan and back home in the United States, where the Harvard University professor's fellow citizens might not have been as welcoming of the opinion that their country was no longer first.

"I don't think that being number two is the worst thing in the world," he told the Globe in 1985, six years after the book was published. "You can be a strong number two, like the Celtics, and still be a very good team and have a lot of esprit. What I worry about is the general spirit of decline."

When trying to gauge what the future might hold, he added, looking back was as important as looking forward — as was the case with England.

"It's not just that England lost the Colonies and is no longer number one, it's that the whole fabric of their society is just falling apart," he said. "People are very distraught, you can't get quality goods, and it's one defeat after another. America may be in for a few defeats, and I don't think we take defeat well."

Dr. Vogel, the Henry Ford II Professor of Social Sciences emeritus at Harvard, died Dec. 20 in Mount Auburn Hospital of complications from surgery. He was 90 and had lived in Cambridge.

Spending most of his career at Harvard, beginning as a graduate student, Dr. Vogel held a number of leadership roles. He twice served as director of the East Asian Research Center, which is now the Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies.

Along with being the second director of that center, he was the second chairman of Harvard's Council for East Asian Studies and had been the first director of the undergraduate concentration in East Asian studies.

Dr. Vogel was also the first director of Harvard's program on US-Japan relations at the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, from 1980 to 1987. He then served as honorary director until his death.

"It is hard to exaggerate the role played by Ezra in this important chapter of Harvard's growth," said Mark Elliott, Harvard's vice provost of international affairs and a professor of Chinese and inner Asian history, for the university's obituary, in the Harvard Gazette.

"As a leader of various academic centers, he shaped the direction of Harvard research on East Asia and ensured it was firmly grounded in real-world affairs; his own work as a scholar shared this same practical quality, as did his many contributions as a public intellectual and his generous mentorship of generations of students and scholars," Elliott said.

Dr. Vogel's writing, however, had an impact far beyond Cambridge. "Japan as Number One" sold even better in Japan than in the United States.

That was also the case with his well-known book "Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China," a 2011 biography about the late Chinese leader that reportedly sold 500,000 copies in China. The book, published when Dr. Vogel was 81, won the 2012 Lionel Gelber Prize and was a biography finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award.

China's Foreign Ministry called Dr. Vogel "an old friend of the Chinese people," the Associated Press reported

"I started in 2000. I thought it'd take five years," he said of "Deng Xiaoping" in a 2011 New York Times interview.

"I wanted to know those who supported Deng and those who criticized Deng from different perspectives," said Dr. Vogel, who added that some liberal intellectuals "told me that if Mao was 70 percent good; Deng was 50 percent good and 50 percent bad."

Ezra F. Vogel was born in 1930 in Delaware, Ohio, and grew up there, the older of two siblings.

His father, Joe Vogel, ran the People's Store, selling men's and boys' clothing, in the center of town. Young Ezra often helped out, as did his mother, Edith Nachman, who worked at the register and did some of the accounting. She had been a stenographer and journalist before marrying, and taught her children precision in writing.

The community is home to Ohio Wesleyan University, and the family would go "to all the concerts and all the lectures," said Dr. Vogel's sister, Fay Busegang of Dedham. "It formed an intellectual background for our family in some ways."

Joe Vogel was a "self-scholar" of history and comparative religion, she said, and would engage in conversations with professors who came into the store.

"Ezra was always a teacher. I was 2 ½ years younger and he was always teaching me. Everything he learned he would teach me," she said, adding that at his retirement gathering, "I said he was my first teacher, and I was his first student."

Dr. Vogel graduated in 1950 from Ohio Wesleyan with a bachelor's degree. Several years ago, he donated to his alma mater the mainland China proceeds from his book "Deng Xiaoping," an estimated $500,000, to support students' studies, travel, and research in East Asia.

After Ohio Wesleyan, he spent two years in the Army, serving as a mental health assistant, and then studied sociology at Harvard, from which he graduated in 1958 with a doctorate. He went to Yale University as an assistant professor before returning to Harvard, where he was a post-doctoral fellow, a lecturer, and then a professor, retiring in 2000.

His first marriage, to psychotherapist and writer Suzanne Hall Vogel, ended in divorce. They had three children — David of Cambridge, Steven of Berkeley, Calif., and Eve of Amherst. Suzanne Vogel died in 2012.

Dr. Vogel's many other books include "Japan's New Middle Class" (1963) and "Canton Under Communism" (1969), the latter of which received the Harvard University Press faculty book of the year award. In 2019, at 89, he published "China and Japan: Facing History."

"As a scholar what's impressive is that he reinvented himself over and over," said Steven, a professor of Asian studies and political science at the University of California, Berkeley.

Dr. Vogel took a leave from Harvard in the early 1990s to serve as the national intelligence officer for East Asia with the National Intelligence Council.

In 1979, he married Charlotte Ikels, who is now a professor of anthropology emeritus at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland.

Dr. Vogel had expected his recent surgery to go smoothly and was active to the end, even taking a 4-mile bicycle ride a few days before entering the hospital.

He always had many projects in progress simultaneously, Charlotte said. "He would complain, 'Oh, my memory is going.' His memory was never going. He remembered thousands and thousands of names in Japanese and Chinese."

In addition to his wife, three children, and sister, Dr. Vogel leaves five grandchildren.

A memorial gathering will be announced in the spring.

Though Dr. Vogel spent his career in the Ivy League, he carried with him his Midwestern upbringing.

"What Ezra retained from Delaware was the small-town friendliness. I think he carried that to Harvard in ways that other professors did not," his sister said.

"He took that kind of outgoing, friendly unpretentiousness and he translated it to Harvard University, and I think people loved him for that," Steven said. "He just loved people."

Bryan Marquard can be reached at bryan.marquard@globe.com.

MATT CRAIG/HARVARD UNIVERSITY NEWS OFFICE/FILE 2008

The author of multiple bestselling books, Dr. Vogel was a longtime member of the Harvard faculty and deeply involved with the direction and growth of Asian studies there.

Sharon Kay Penman, whose novels plumbed Britain's past, at age 75

By Clay Risen
NEW YORK TIMES

Sharon Kay Penman, a former tax lawyer whose best-selling epics about medieval England and Wales drew legions of admirers for her meticulous research and commitment to historical facts, died on Jan. 22 in a hospital in Atlantic City. She was 75.

Her brother, William J. Penman Jr., said the cause was pneumonia.

"She was a giant in the field," said Margaret George, author of historical novels like "The Splendor Before the Dark," about the Roman emperor Nero. "She was a diligent scholar but she was able to write accessible books that were real page-turners."

Starting with her first book, "The Sunne in Splendour" (1982), about King Richard III, Ms. Penman loaded her novels with material she gathered from years of research, both on the ground in Britain and in the stacks at the University of Pennsylvania library, near her home. Before the Internet made finding obscure history books easy, she would scour secondhand shops in England, shipping home boxes and boxes of texts, amassing a library of several thousand volumes.

Though many of her books topped 1,000 pages, she developed an extensive fan base, and several of her later works made The New York Times' bestseller list. She reciprocated that devotion, leading tours of medieval English sites and even bringing a few readers with her on a trip to Jerusalem to research her last book, "The Land Beyond the Sea" (2020), about the Crusades.

"She told me many times, 'Don't forget who's reading your books,'" said Steve Duffy, the author of the forthcoming historical novel "The Kaiser's Web."

Ms. Penman was likewise appreciated by other historical novelists as a mentor and advocate. She offered advice to unpublished writers, sent critiques of their drafts, and wrote blurbs once their work appeared.

"I was a longtime admirer of her writing and was hugely flattered when she published an appreciation of my work," said Bernard Cornwell, the author of his own long list of historical best-sellers, including, most recently, "War Lord" (2020). "She was immensely generous with her encouragement and praise, a tireless supporter of other writers, and self-deprecating about her own work."

Sharon Kay Penman was born on Aug. 13, 1945, in New York City and raised in Atlantic City, where her father, William J. Penman, waited tables and drove a jitney. Her mother, Theresa (Riggs) Penman, also waited tables. She is survived by her brother.

Her father wrote novels in his spare time, though despite decades of labor, he never managed to have one published. His daughter followed his lead, writing short stories in high school and later as a history major at the University of Texas at Austin, sending them home for his approval.

It was in Austin that Ms. Penman first encountered the more positive revisionist view of Richard III, the last king of the Plantagenet dynasty, who died at the hands of Henry Tudor on Bosworth Field. She became consumed with his story.

Though there is a rich historical debate over the king's record, most people still think of him as the power-mad hunchback depicted by Shakespeare. "My Richard is a revisionist Richard," she said later. "He's not Shakespeare's 'bottled spider.'"

She began research for a novel about the much-maligned monarch in 1968, and continued through law school at Rutgers University-Camden. One day, six years into her work on the book, she left her 400-page manuscript, her only copy, on the trunk of her car while she was moving things into her apartment. When she returned, moments later, it was gone. Though she suspected a passerby, she later lay blame on a "vengeful Tudor ghost."

Unable to comprehend starting from scratch, Ms. Penman set aside her creative aspirations and turned to her legal career. She graduated in 1975 and moved to Los Angeles, then returned to Atlantic City, where she joined a firm specializing in tax law.

It took almost four years for her writer's block to pass. When it did, the work on her Richard novel flowed. She left her job to spend months in York, England, for research, eventually producing a 1,236-page manuscript. When she submitted it to her publisher, Henry Holt & Co., her editor asked if she felt any pangs of conscience for all the dead trees her book would require. The two whittled it down to a relatively slim 936 pages.

For Ms. Penman, a commitment to historical accuracy was more than just a personal choice; it was, she wrote in an opinion piece in 2020 for the History News Network, the writer's moral obligation to keep as close to the facts as possible, and to be transparent about where the record had been fudged — especially when "fact" itself was under assault.

Pauline Anna Strom, at 74; she composed enduring, beguiling electronic sounds

By Neil Genzlinger
NEW YORK TIMES

In the early 1980s, a blind woman stood in her San Francisco apartment with one hand in a bowl of water and the other holding a microphone, recording the burbling sound as she stirred and splashed.

"It's a wonder I didn't kill myself," she joked years later.

The woman was Pauline Anna Strom, and her beguiling homemade synthesizer recordings were prized by aficionados of electronic music. The water sounds went into one of her first compositions, which appeared on her debut recording, "Trans-Millenia Consort" (1982).

Ms. Strom died Dec. 13 at her home in San Francisco, two months before her first new music in 30 years was to be released. She was 76.

Matt Werth, the founder of her record label, RVNG Intl., announced the death. He did not specify the cause.

Ms. Strom, who was blind from birth, found in synthesizers a way to create compositions that reflected her complex internal landscape, one that was not confined to the present but roamed freely through time and emotions.

"I consider myself the 'Trans-Millenia Consort,'" she wrote in the liner notes to that recording, "by which title I wish to be known. This to me is a personal declaration that I have been in previous lives, that I am in this life, and that I shall in future lives be a musical consort to time."

"Trans-Millenia Consort," which Ms. Strom recorded on her own equipment at her home in San Francisco and which was issued in a limited release on vinyl and cassette in 1982, was followed by six more recordings, the last released in 1988. In 2017, a broader audience discovered Ms. Strom when Werth's label released "Trans-Millenia Music," a compilation of pieces from those 1980s efforts.

"'Trans-Millenia Music' captures an artist expressing herself freely and without fear or hesitation," Daniel Martin-McCormick wrote in a review for Pitchfork, "and it makes good on its title. Work like this may fade into obscurity, but it remains fresh to all who seek it out, still vibrant and pulsing with energy in any age — new or otherwise."

Werth said his label will release a new recording, "Angel Tears in Sunlight," on Feb 19.

Ms. Strom did not dwell on her blindness ("The blindness to me is a nuisance more than anything," she once said), although mastering her synthesizers was a process of experimentation, since in the 1980s, when the instruments were relatively new, there were no users' manuals for the blind. Ultimately, she thought, her lack of sight enhanced her music.

"My hearing and inner visualization have, I feel, developed to a higher level than perhaps they would have otherwise," she told the publication Earock in a rare early-career interview in 1986. "And it doesn't affect my abilities from a technical standpoint, either. It's quite possible to program synthesizers, effects units, accurately record one's work, and handle a mixer. I do this all by sound."

"In fact," she added, "I rather like working in the dark."

Pauline Anna Tuell was born Oct. 1, 1946, in Baton Rouge, La., to Paul and Marjorie (Landry) Tuell. She grew up in Kentucky in a Roman Catholic household and said that chants and other types of church music influenced her musical ideas, but so did the works of Bach, Chopin, and others.

She was married twice, to Bob Strom and then to Kevin Bierl, but the dates of those marriages and how they ended are, like many details of her life, hard to come by. She moved to San Francisco when her husband — it is unclear which — was stationed there while in the military. Reclusive by nature, she lived in the same San Francisco apartment for decades. ("Thank God this city has rent control," she told the website listentothis.info in 2018.)

Her early musical efforts included some do-it-yourself sound effects like those in "Emerald Pool," but she gradually became more adept at creating whatever sound she wanted with the multiple synthesizers she accumulated. She was influenced by the German band Tangerine Dream and German composer Klaus Schulze, pioneers in electronic music.

"The spaciousness of it, the timeless quality, where it can be in any universal realm — that's what captivated me," she said. "It didn't make you sad, it didn't make you romantic. It was just driving, and it made you want to explore."

Ms. Strom leaves three sisters, Loretta Hoffman, Barbara Boniakowski, and Anita Burnett.

When her 1980s music was rereleased in 2017, Ms. Strom was surprised at the burst of attention and the new fans.

"A friend of mine called me and said, 'You've got 20,000 people out there that know you exist and liked your music,'" she recalled in the Red Bull interview, "and I said: 'What? Why?' "

AUBREY TRINCANATO VIA NEW YORK TIMES

Ms. Strom (above in 2017), who was blind from birth, created compositions on synthesizers.

Copyright © 2024 Newspapers.com. All Rights Reserved.

POWERED BY Newspapers.com